

United States Clerk of Court for the District of Minnesota



**U.S. Clerk of Court,
Francis E. Dosal.**

The Office of the Clerk of the United States District Court was provided for in the First Judiciary Act in 1789 which authorized a judge for each district and allowed the judge to appoint a Clerk of the Court. The Clerk of the District Court also served as the Clerk of the Circuit Court because the office of circuit court judge was not established until 1869. Prior to 1869, one of the justices of the United States Supreme Court was responsible for judicial matters in an assigned circuit. By act of Congress in 1839, the justice assigned to the circuit and the district judge jointly were authorized to appoint a separate clerk for the circuit court, but often the same individual was appointed to both offices. Separate clerks for circuit and district courts became the norm in 1869 when the office of circuit court judge was established and given the authority to appoint a clerk of the circuit court without the concurrence of the district court judge. As the judicial system grew, it became common for districts with more than one judge to have a clerk appointed by each of the judges in the district. Thus, each division of each district had its own judge and its own clerk. The judicial code of 1948 ended this confusion by providing that there should be one clerk for the district regardless of the number of divisions and that the clerk would be responsible for all offices within the district.

Historically, the most important duty associated with the clerk is the maintenance of the records of the court. The First Judiciary Act required the clerk to "record all the orders, decrees, judgments, and proceedings of said court." In more recent times as the courts have become more complex, the clerk's position has evolved into that of the modern day administrator of a complex governmental organization.

Originally, the Clerk of Court was compensated by the allowance of fees established by statute. An act in 1792, for example, allowed the federal court clerk to collect the same fees as those normally charged by the clerks of the state in which the federal court was located. In addition, the clerk was allowed \$5 a day for attending any session of court and 10 cents per mile for his expense in traveling from place to place within the district. In 1814 the compensation of the clerk was changed from one of fees charged to entitlement of one-half of one-percent of all monies deposited in the court. Finally, in 1919 all clerks

of court were paid a salary determined by the Attorney General of the United States which ranged between \$2,500 and \$5,000 a year. Fiscal supervision of the Clerk of Court was exercised by the Attorney General until the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts was established by Congress in 1939.

The following individuals have served as Clerk of the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota:

George W. Prescott	Appointed 1858
James W. Taylor	Appointed 1861
William A. Spencer	Appointed 1863
Charles L. Spencer	Appointed 1897
Joel M. Dickey	Appointed 1921
Margaret L. Mullane	Appointed 1932
Thomas H. Howard	Appointed 1939
Chell Smith	Appointed 1950
Frank A. Massey	Appointed 1956
Harry A. Sieben	Appointed 1971
Robert E. Hess	Appointed 1980
Francis E. Dosal	Appointed 1984